



# Environmental Management Systems for the Australian Olive Industry

The Australian olive industry continues to grow and to promote efficiency, quality and excellence in all industry operations from plant nursery to consumer. The industry's voluntary Code of Practice acknowledges that good environmental management is an important element of quality assurance and public confidence.

This fact sheet summarises the report *Establishment of Environmental Management Systems for the Olive Industry* which highlights the relationship between the olive industry and environmental systems and develops proposals for improving environmental management throughout the industry in the interests of quality products, production efficiency and public reputation.

## Background

From nurseries to olive groves, to processors, traders, retailers and customers, the whole olive industry depends on natural systems – and on preserving the best possible environmental conditions to produce the best possible product. In addition, it is often stated that consumers increasingly have regard to environmental factors when making choices in the marketplace.

The Australian Olive Association's voluntary Code of Practice requires the use of environmental management systems based on continuous improvement principles with attention to biodiversity. The industry's voluntary Code of Practice applies at the moment only to producers and traders of extra virgin olive oil and is being extended to table olives; however, the Code will affect the operations of olive fruit suppliers, rural services providers and industry contractors.

## About the Author

Nelson Quinn is an olive grower and shareholder in an olive processing plant. He has been an active member of olive industry associations for many years. He has also been involved in the development and operation of the Australian Land Management Certification System and is a director of the not-for-profit management organisation, Australian Landcare Management System Ltd.

## Where to find the full research publication

The publication, *Establishment of Environmental Management Systems for the Olive Industry*, RIRDC publication no. 11/089, by Nelson Quinn can be downloaded from the RIRDC website at <https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/11-089>



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## Making environmental management systems happen in the Australian olive industry

Although the value of environmental management systems is seldom questioned, the take up of such systems is still low in agriculture compared to other businesses. To develop and implement industry-wide environmental management systems, the industry should:

- use only internationally credible environmental management systems with certification processes
- facilitate fast and effective environmental management system implementation through links with market place benefits, information availability, cost reductions, scale of operation, local social and economic factors, indicator and reporting systems, and recognition and reward systems

- ensure and encourage effective dissemination of information and rapid behavioural change
- enhance the introduction of systems and their continuing effectiveness by permanent industry institutional arrangements (including an environmental officer), an integrated approach and adoption of an environmental charter.

## The environmental charter – a tool for environmental management

An environmental charter demonstrates to the community at large that an industry takes environmental responsibility seriously and that it understands the important place of environmental management in pursuit of quality and public acceptance of the industry and its products.

It is to the industry's advantage to maintain and demonstrate good and ever-improving environmental management with respect to increasing environmental resilience and adaptability; reinforcing its quality image; keeping



up with others in the supply chain (both domestic and international); continuing to impress customers and the general public; maintaining good relationships with government agencies at all levels.

***An industry environmental charter should:***

- support quality and production efficiency
- be the cornerstone of industry research and development
- embrace a holistic approach
- support systems for anticipating and acting on new issues
- publicise and entrench industry institutional arrangements supporting continuing better environmental management.

At the same time, each part of the olive industry has unique environmental management needs and circumstances; therefore,

a 'one-size-fits-all' model is not appropriate at the enterprise level. A productive way to link the use of an industry environmental charter with industry-specific action would be for enterprises to adopt their own environment charters. Such enterprise charters demonstrate commitment, provide a check list of relevant items, generate staff awareness, provide day-to-day operational guidance, and provide a public demonstration of environmental awareness and responsibility.

***An enterprise environmental charter should outline commitments in the areas of:***

- information dissemination and raising awareness of environmental issues
- energy use and water use
- landscape and biodiversity management
- waste management
- green purchasing and packaging
- commitment of management to environmental issues.

Examples of draft charter documents are presented in the full report. The drafts can be used to help individual olive enterprises meet their environmental obligations.

## **What this means for the industry**

Everyone in the olive industry is an environmental manager and becoming better environmental managers will have many advantages. A positive, environmentally sensitive and internationally acceptable approach will put the Australian industry at the forefront of current developments. Particularly if environmental issues become the cornerstone of industry research and development, the industry's vulnerability to unpredictable events – as might arise from climate change and input price shocks – can be significantly reduced.



# Environmental Management Systems for the Australian Olive Industry

This fact sheet is an addition to RIRDC's diverse range of over 2000 research publications and it forms part of our New Industries/Olives R&D program, which aims to:

- provide information which establishes the benefits of Australian olive products
- maintain the current high quality product while improving productivity, profitability and environmental management through all stages of the supply chain
- develop strategies for existing and new olive producers to reduce the effects of climate change and variability
- build an educated, collaborative, innovative and skilled industry workforce and a cost effective, well-funded RD&E program.
- Most of RIRDC's publications are available for viewing, free downloading or purchasing online at [www.rirdc.gov.au](http://www.rirdc.gov.au). Purchases can also be made by phoning 1300 634 313.

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